DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 095 162 SP 008 342

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TITLE Open and Traditional Teachers: Differences in Orientation to Interpersonal Relations.
PUB DATE [73]
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Elementary School Teachers; *Individual Characteristics; Open Education; *Personality; *Teaching Styles

ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between certain personality characteristics of professional elementary school teachers and their teaching styles, rated on a continuum from traditional to open. Findings indicate the following: (a) there is a negative correlation between scores indicating an open-classroom orientation and scores indicating a desire to be included by others in their activities; (b) there is a negative correlation between scores indicating an open-classroom orientation and scores indicating the desire to be influenced by others; and (c) there is a positive correlation between scores indicating an open-classroom orientation and scores indicating the degree to which a person seeks to initiate interpersonal activities. The author suggests that these findings be used in developing criteria for training teachers in the style most compatible with their personalities. (A 14-item bibliography is included.) (Author/PD)

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OPEN AND TRADITIONAL TEACHERS:

DIFFERENCES IN ORIENTATION TO INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

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This study explored the relationship between certain personality characteristics of professional elementary school teachers and their teaching styles rated on a continuum from traditional to open. There was a negative correlation between scores indicating an open classroom orientation and scores indicating a desire to be included by others in their activities, (rho = -.5, $p < .01$). There was a negative correlation between scores indicating an open classroom orientation and scores indicating the desire to be influenced by others, (rho = -.4, $p < .05$). There was a positive correlation between scores indicating an open classroom orientation and scores indicating the degree to which a person seeks to initiate interpersonal activities, (rho = .454, $p < .05$). Implications for teacher training are discussed.

Currently, in America, one finds open education receiving much attention, both public and professional. The stimulus for its development in this country comes from the integrated day approach pioneered in Leicestershire (England). Many American educators, after visiting Leicestershire and reading about the integrated day approach, have combined this approach with their own ideas in an attempt to implement a new educational style in this country. It has been given many labels, e.g. "'free day', 'integrated day', 'integrated classroom', 'informal classroom', 'developmental classroom', and 'child-centered classroom' (Barth, 1971, p. 117)", but the label that will be used in this paper is 'open education' as

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actualized in an 'open classroom'.

> There are four operating principles of the open classroom. First, the room itself is decentralized: an open flexible space divided into functional areas, rather than one fixed homogeneous unit. Second, the children are free for much of the time to explore this room individually or in groups and to choose their own activities. Third, the environment is rich in learning resources, including plenty of concrete materials, as well as books and other media. Fourth, the teacher and her aides work most of the time with individual children or two or three, hardly ever presenting the same material to the class as a whole. (Gross & Gross, 1972, p. 10)

The position of open education runs counter to much of mainstream educational practice which "classify the curriculum into subjects, group learners by ability, and view knowledge as represented authoritatively by the teacher or in prescribed vicarious materials of instruction (Walberg & Thomas, 1972, p. 198)."

After analyzing the recent literature in education, Evans (1971) developed a classroom observation rating scale and teacher questionnaire which "effectively demonstrated that two different pedagogical styles could be theoretically identified ... and empirically verified in the field (p. 29)."

> The traditional teachers were much more in control of the learning environment with regard to organizing the child's use of time, materials, space, and the curriculum to be studied. They expected children not to talk while working, nor to move about without asking permission. The physical environment was uniformily arranged so that children could conveniently see the blackboard or the teacher from their desks. The teacher stressed keeping all children within his sight so that

> he could make sure they were doing what they were supposed to do. In general, the children were supposed to use standardized curriculum materials and the teacher gave academic achievement a top priority. Testing was used by the teachers for grouping the children and for grading them in comparison with their peers.
>
> The open classroom teachers, by contrast, allowed the children more freedom in the use of time, choice of activities, and ways of working. The children worked individually and in small groups at various activities, which often involved the use of manipulative materials. The children used 'books' written by their classmates as part of their reading and reference materials, and often children spontaneously looked at and discussed each others' work. The teacher concentrated his time with the children providing intensive diagnostic help rather than giving whole group instruction. Children were encouraged to use other areas of the building and school yard during school time. The children seemed deeply involved in what they were doing. (Evans, 1971, p. 29-30)

With the existence of two distinct pedagogical styles empirically verified, one must then be concerned with the potential for a child to achieve academically in an open classroom when compared to the potential in a traditional classroom. Reel (1973) found no significant difference between children in an open classroom and children in a traditional classroom on the Stanford Achievement Test.

Reel (1973) went on to say that the actual positive benefit may be the experiencing of a "freedom to learn in the classroom", a "freedom from fear of being wrong" and a "trust in the worth of each individual (p. 5617)." If there is this positive benefit then open education should be pursued as a

replacement for the traditional approach. However, the research to date has failed to be decisive in delineating these positive benefits. (Goldupp, 1972; Kohler, 1973; Ruedi & west, 1973)

There seems to be a much more immediate and pragmatic reason for advocating open education in the need to utilize numerous teaching styles.

> In school the education of children too often disregards (the) principle of types. We may find a child interested in sight who will not listen becouse he always wants to be looking at something. In the case of such a child we ought to be patient in trying to educate him to hear. ... (Children) may be good at listening or good at seeing. Some always like to be moving and to be working. We cannot expect the same results for the three types of children, especially if the teacher prefers one method, as, for example the method for listening children. When such a method is used the lookers and the doers will suffer and will be hindered in their development. (Adler, 1969, p. 50)

In conjunction with Adler's belief, the evidence indicates that children who score high on convergent intelligence tests feel uncomfortable when the learning environment isn't nighly structured (Horn, 1973). Thus, the development of different teaching styles and learning environments, i.e. pluralism, is imperative if the educational system is going to meet the needs of the "listeners", the "doers" and the "lookers".

In implementing the goal of pluralism, teacher training takes on increased importance. Intuitively, the authors feel that the demand characteristics of a traditional classroom environment and teaching style would be significantly

different from those of an open classroom environment and teaching style. Thus, teachers should be trained for the classroom environment they will be most comfortable in and best able to utilize to its full extent. In developing criterion for these types of judgements, possible differences between professional traditional and open teachers in their personality structure need to be investigated. Coletta (1973), utilizing the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule and the Thurstone Temperament Schedule, found no significant difference between these two groups of teachers. Coletta's study looked at intra-personality attributes; however, other heretofore unexamined variables may differentiate these two groups of teachers. Utilizing a measure of interpersonal behavior, Feitler, Wiener and Blumberg (1970) explored the relationship between preferred classroom settings and the responses on the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation - Behavior (FIRO-B) of undergraduate and graduate students. Each S was asked to select the classroom setting they would feel most comfortable teaching in. Two nonsignificant trends were indicated: (1) Scores indicating a desire to be included in other peoples activities were related to being most comfortable in a structured classroom environment, and (2) Scores indicating a desire to be influenced by others were related to being most comfortable in a structured classroom environment. Although the results failed to be significant, they indicate the potential of the FIRO-B to successfully tap the germane variables in

exploring the relationship between teaching style and personality.

Thus, the authors designed the present study to measure the relationship between the FIRO-B and the teaching style of professional elementary school teachers rated on a continuum from traditional to open. The authors hypothesized that the FIRO-B would distinguish between these two groups of teachers, with four differences specifically predictable: (1) Open teachers will express more affection than traditional teachers, (2) Open teachers will express less control than traditional teachers, (3) Traditional teachers will want to be included by others to a greater degree than open teachers, and (4) Traditional teachers will want to be influenced by others to a greater degree than open teachers.

Method

Subjects.--Ss were elementary school teachers who agreed to participate in this experiment. Forty-three teachers participated: fifteen open, eleven open/traditional and seventeen traditional. Professional educators and administrators provided names of teachers who fit into the above mentioned categories and these teachers were approached as potential Ss.

Questionnaires.--Ss were asked to complete two questionnaires, Questionnaire #1 (Q1) and the FIRO-B.

Q1 was developed by Evans (1971) as a method of determining

the type of classroom environment a teacher has developed. Walberg and Thomas (1972) found a Canonical correlation of .8 ($p < .001$) between the responses of teachers on Q1 and the ratings of classroom observers using Q1. Therefore, Q1 was utilized to rank the classrooms from traditional to open.

The FIRO-B measures "how an individual characteristically relates to other people (Shutz, 1967, p. 4)." The interpersonal dimensions measured are inclusion (I), control (C) and affection (A). These are analyzed in terms of one's expressed behavior (e), i.e. how one reacts towards other people, and one's wanted behavior (w), i.e. how one would like to be treated by other people. The FIRO-B also gives a measure of expressiveness (e-w), i.e. the degree to which one feels comfortable initiating interpersonal activities. (Shutz, 1967)

Proceedure.--The open teachers and open/traditional teachers, through their principals, were approached in their classrooms. After a brief introduction, each teacher was asked if they would be willing to participate. If so, they were presented a packet which included general instructions, the two questionnaires and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the returning of the completed questionnaires. Twenty-two Ss received general instructions requesting that they complete the FIRO-B first and twenty-one received instructions requesting that Q1 be filled out first. Ss were requested to respond to all items and not to discuss their participation in this experiment with their teaching colleagues until they

received a summary of the results. Ss were then thanked and contact was terminated.

In order not to disturb the more structured environment of a traditional classroom, in each school visited, the principal arranged a meeting with traditional teachers and the above format was followed.

Twenty-three Ss returned properly completed questionnaires and their responses were utilized in the data analysis. A Spearman Rank Order Correlation (rho) was performed to deliniate the relationship between a teacher's orientation to interpersonal relations as measured by the FIRO-B and his/her teaching style ranked on a continuum from traditional to open.

Results

The correlations between teachers' orientation to interpersonal relations and their teaching style are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Spearman Rank Order Correlation (rho)

FIRO-B	Teaching Style (Traditional - Open)
eI	.248
eC	.099
eA	.292
wI	-.500 *
wC	-.400 **
wA	.306
(e-w)	.454 ***

* $p < .01$ (one tailed test)
** $p < .05$ (one tailed test)
*** $p < .05$ (two tailed test)

The results indicate three significant relationships. First, there was a negative correlation between scores indicating an open classroom orientation and scores indicating a desire to be included by others in their activities, (rho= -.5, $p < .01$). Second, there was a negative correlation between scores indicating an open classroom orientation and scores indicating a desire to be influenced by others, (rho= -.4, $p < .05$). Finally, there was a positive correlation between scores indicating an open classroom orientation and scores indicating the degree to which a person seeks to initiate interpersonal activities, (rho= .454, $p < .05$).

Discussion

The present study was designed to explore the hypothesis that open and traditional teachers differ significantly with respect to certain personality variables. Three differences were found: two of the four hypothesized differences were shown to exist and one unpredicted difference was discovered.

As hypothesized, traditional teachers, to a greater degree than open teachers, want to be included by other people, regardless of the degree of effort made to be included. Also, traditional teachers want to be influenced and controlled by others to a greater degree than open teachers. The data failed to support two of the hypothesized differences: 1) expressed affection and teaching style and 2) expressed control and teaching style.

In addition to the predicted differences, the data indicates that open teachers enjoy initiating interpersonal activities whereas traditional teachers prefer to be the recipients of interaction. Observations of open and traditional classrooms indicate that the amount of activity taking place is one of the most salient differences. A properly functioning open classroom requires the initiation of numerous, small group activities, whereas the traditional classroom centers around a few activities involving the entire class.

As suggested in the introduction, these differences should be used in developing criteria for the training of teachers in the teaching style most compatible with their personalities. That is, in the process of preparing individuals for teaching careers, teacher training institutions should be concerned with the demand characteristics of the different teaching styles. Prospective teachers need to be made aware of the successful teacher's personality profile for each pedagogy, so that a choice of style consistent with his/her capabilities can be made. In essence, then, the extent to which potential teachers can comfortably adapt to the demands of the situation is of the utmost importance.

The present study indicates the need for a better understanding of the demand characteristics of different teaching styles. The authors hope further research will continue to improve our understanding of the relationships between

personality, educational philosophy, assumptions about learning and knowledge, and teaching style.

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